



Sample Provided by: Nielsen Scarborough
Sample Size: 436 Adult Residents of PA-7

Field Dates: January 25 – February 12, 2021

Note: In the [national survey](#), some questions were asked slightly differently. See endnotes for details.

In this survey, you will be asked to evaluate a number of proposals for making changes to the way the U.S. federal government works. We will give you some background on the issue, introduce you to some current debates, and then ask for your final recommendations. You do not need any background or previous experience in the subject.

These proposals have the following goals:

- To reduce or counterbalance the influence of big campaign donors—including special interests, corporations and wealthy people—on the Federal government.
- To increase the responsiveness of elected officials in Washington to the interests and views of the American people.

Whether or not these goals are important, as well as the specifics of the proposals have sparked considerable debate in Congress and elsewhere for a variety of reasons.

First, we are going to consider some proposals that have the goal of reducing or counterbalancing the influence of big campaign donors—including special interests, corporations and wealthy people—on the Federal government.

Q1. How important is this goal to you?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very/Somewhat Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important	Slightly/Not at all Important	Refused/ Don't know
PA-7	45.1%	35.5%	80.6%	10.9%	8.4%	19.3%	0.0%
GOP	38.0%	46.3%	84.3%	11.0%	4.7%	15.7%	0.0%
Dem.	54.8%	27.1%	81.9%	10.9%	7.2%	18.1%	0.0%

Here is some background on this issue.

In recent decades, Congress passed new laws to reduce the influence of big campaign donors by putting greater limits on campaign donations.

However, many of those limits were rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court as contrary to First Amendment protections on freedom of expression. While there are still some limits on what one donor can give to a campaign, there are also alternative channels that still allow large donations.

Of particular importance, the Supreme Court made some decisions in 2010, especially the one known as 'Citizens United,' which opened up new channels for donations, especially through organizations called 'Super PACs.' As a result, the amount of contributions from big donors increased substantially.

In response to these Supreme Court decisions and the increasing amount of donations from big donors, some people have proposed passing an amendment to the Constitution to enable Congress to impose greater limits on campaign donations. Later, we will consider this possibility.

First, we would like you to consider a number of other proposals that do not require a Constitutional amendment, but also have the potential to reduce or counterbalance the influence of big campaign donors.

Six-to-One Match with New Tax

One proposal that seeks to reduce or counterbalance the influence of big donors would reduce the percentage of donations that come from big donors by increasing the percentage that comes from small donors.

The idea is to create a program that provides financial support to US Congressional and Presidential candidates who agree to limit their fundraising to small donors. Here is how it would work:

- A candidate who chooses to participate must:
 - agree not to take donations of more than \$1,000 in total from any one person
 - not use more than \$50,000 of their own money to fund their campaign
 - show that they are viable as a candidate by raising a substantial number of small donations.
- The candidate would then receive additional funds as follows:
 - a six-to-one match of donations up to \$200 per donor (e.g., if someone were to make a donation of \$100, the candidate would receive an additional \$600)

The program would be funded by making slight increases in the fines for individuals or corporations, who violate federal laws. Here is an argument **in favor of** this proposal:

Q2—Q28w3. By limiting candidates to small donors, big donors will have less influence on them once they are in office. As an elected official, they will then be more likely to be responsive to their constituents, as a whole, not just well-financed special interests. Candidates who do not want to be beholden to big donors will be more able to run for office and succeed. This program won't add to the deficit and will improve the quality of American democracy.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	34.7%	51.0%	85.7%	10.2%	3.5%	13.7%	0.6%
GOP	34.4%	52.3%	86.7%	10.8%	2.5%	13.3%	0.0%
Dem.	38.0%	52.6%	90.6%	6.7%	1.9%	8.6%	0.7%

Here is an argument **against** this proposal:

Q3—Q29w3. Giving money to any candidate—just because they have a substantial following of small donors—won't necessarily produce good candidates. This will give fringe candidates who are not electable a government-funded platform for furthering their extreme ideas. Finally, ideas like this have been tried in some states and there's no clear evidence they have diminished the influence of special interests.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	19.7%	42.7%	62.4%	29.8%	7.4%	37.2%	0.5%
GOP	17.8%	42.1%	59.9%	36.6%	3.5%	40.1%	0.0%
Dem.	20.7%	45.1%	65.8%	26.2%	7.0%	33.2%	1.0%

So, here, again is the proposal:

Create a program that provides financial support to US Congressional and Presidential candidates who agree to limit their fundraising to small donors. Here is how it would work:

- A candidate who chooses to participate must:
 - agree not to take donations of more than \$1,000 in total from any one person
 - not use more than \$50,000 of their own money to fund their campaign
 - show that they are viable as a candidate by raising a substantial number of small donations.

- The candidate would then receive additional funds as follows:
 - a six-to-one match of donations up to \$200 per donor (e.g., if someone were to make a donation of \$100, the candidate would receive an additional \$600)

The program would be funded by making slight increases in the fines for individuals or corporations, who violate federal laws.

Q4—Q30w3. Please select how acceptable this proposal would be to you.

	Mean	Unacceptable (0-4)	Just Tolerable (5)	Acceptable (6-10)	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	5.6	27.4%	25.6%	47.0%	0.0%
GOP	5.4	30.1%	24.5%	45.4%	0.0%
Dem.	6.1	21.4%	24.2%	54.4%	0.0%

Q5—Q31w3. So, would you recommend that your Members of Congress vote in favor or against this proposal?ⁱ

	Favor	Against	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	73.5%	26.0%	0.5%
GOP	70.1%	29.9%	0.0%
Dem.	78.7%	21.0%	0.3%

Disclosure

Another idea for reducing or counterbalancing the influence of big donors is to require that donations to candidates and political causes be publicly disclosed or made more transparent.

While many forms of campaign-related donations and spending are required to be publicly disclosed, there are donations that can be made anonymously to certain organizations that can support candidates and political causes. Critics of this kind of giving call it 'dark money' because it is anonymous.

Until recently, the amount that could be donated to such organizations was limited, but with the U.S. Supreme Court's "Citizens United" decision, these limits were removed as an interference with free speech. Since then, the amount of such anonymous donations has gone up dramatically.

There are a number of proposals for requiring that such donations be publicly disclosed. There is also a debate about whether there should be greater public disclosure of campaign-related donations.

Here are two arguments **in favor of** greater public disclosure of campaign-related donations:

Q6—Q15w1. When campaign-related donations are fully disclosed, it makes it more difficult for elected officials to do favors, taking actions that serve the interests of the donor, rather than the common good. If the donation is disclosed, the public, the media, and watchdog groups can question whether an action was a favor in exchange for a donation. This will create political costs for the elected official as well as discourage donors from seeking favors through donations.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	37.9%	46.9%	84.8%	10.7%	3.6%	14.3%	1.0%
GOP	40.1%	47.9%	88.0%	9.0%	1.4%	10.4%	1.5%
Dem.	42.9%	44.6%	87.5%	10.1%	1.6%	11.7%	0.9%

Q7—Q16w1. When judging a candidate people have a right to know who is providing money in support of the candidate. Voters can get a better sense of the allegiances that the candidate might have and the interests they might support.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	48.9%	35.7%	84.6%	10.4%	3.2%	13.6%	1.8%
GOP	51.7%	39.3%	91.0%	7.1%	1.2%	8.3%	0.7%
Dem.	53.0%	31.4%	84.4%	12.8%	1.8%	14.6%	1.0%

Here are two arguments **against** greater public disclosure of campaign-related donations:

Q8—Q17w1. Making a campaign donation has been established by the U.S. Supreme Court as a basic right as part of the principle of free speech. If every donation is subject to public scrutiny, it can lead to claims that it was basically a bribe, when in fact it might not be at all. People may also get harassed or threatened for making donations. This will discourage people from making such donations, including completely legitimate ones.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	16.3%	40.5%	56.8%	30.3%	12.6%	42.9%	0.3%
GOP	23.8%	41.9%	65.7%	23.4%	10.9%	34.3%	0.0%
Dem.	14.3%	36.6%	50.9%	36.0%	12.6%	48.6%	0.6%

Q9—Q18w1. Public disclosure is not going to prevent elected officials from doing favors in exchange for financial support. Even if elected officials are, in fact, taking a position to serve the interests of a donor (in exchange for support), the officials can simply say that they think the position is the right one--and there's no way to prove they don't think that. Furthermore, in some cases the politician may genuinely support the position. Disclosure will not clarify what's really going on.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	16.6%	40.0%	56.6%	31.2%	11.2%	42.4%	1.1%
GOP	16.7%	41.0%	57.7%	32.4%	8.9%	41.3%	1.1%
Dem.	17.7%	37.6%	55.3%	29.4%	14.4%	43.8%	0.9%

Disclosure Final Assessments and Recommendations

Now, here is one proposal for greater public disclosure that is included in a Congressional bill under consideration.

Currently, all donations made directly to campaigns must be made public, but there is no requirement for a variety of organizations that spend money on campaign-related efforts to disclose the names of their donors and the amounts donated.

Q10—Q19w1. This proposal would require that all individuals or organizations that donate or receive a total of \$10,000 or more for campaign-related activities promptly register with the Federal Election Commission, and have their name and the amount of the donations listed on the Commission's website. Please select how acceptable this proposal would be to you.

	Mean	Unacceptable (0-4)	Just Tolerable (5)	Acceptable (6-10)	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	6.6	21.9%	15.9%	62.1%	0.1%
GOP	6.6	22.9%	10.8%	66.0%	0.4%
Dem.	6.9	22.0%	11.4%	66.6%	0.0%

Q11—Q20w1. So, would you recommend that your Member of Congress vote in favor of or against this proposal?

	Favor	Against	Refused / Don't know
PA-7	76.8%	22.2%	1.1%
GOP	81.2%	18.8%	0.0%
Dem.	76.0%	21.7%	2.3%
National	81.8%	17.5%	0.7%
GOP	76.5%	23.2%	0.3%
Dem.	88.4%	10.9%	0.8%
Indep.	77.0%	21.8%	1.2%

Here is a proposal for greater public disclosure that is included in a Congressional bill under consideration. Currently, when corporations, unions, and other groups spend money on their own campaign-related activity, such as running a TV ad that is supportive of a candidate, they do not have to report it.

Q12—Q22w1. This proposal would require that, these groups:

- report this spending, within 24 hours, to their shareholders and members
- make this information available to the public on their websites
- report it to the FEC

Please select how acceptable this proposal would be to you.

	Mean	Unacceptable (0-4)	Just Tolerable (5)	Acceptable (6-10)	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	6.9	19.3%	10.5%	70.2%	0.0%
GOP	7.0	17.7%	7.5%	74.8%	0.0%
Dem.	6.9	20.2%	9.0%	70.8%	0.0%

Q13—Q23w1. So, would you recommend that your Members of Congress vote in favor of or against this proposal?

	Favor	Against	Refused / Don't know
PA-7	81.4%	18.3%	0.3%
GOP	80.5%	19.5%	0.0%
Dem.	83.5%	15.8%	0.7%
National	85.3%	14.3%	0.5%
GOP	82.7%	17.0%	0.3%
Dem.	87.9%	11.4%	0.7%
Indep.	84.5%	15.1%	0.4%

Here is a proposal for greater public disclosure that is included in a Congressional bill under consideration.

Currently, when significant donors spend money on their own campaign-related activity, such as running a TV ad that is supportive of a candidate, they do not have to report it.

Q14—Q25w1. This proposal says that the Federal Communications Commission would require the public disclosure of the names of significant donors in paying for TV or radio ads in support of candidates or related to controversial public issues. Please select how acceptable this proposal would be to you.

	Mean	Unacceptable (0-4)	Just Tolerable (5)	Acceptable (6-10)	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	6.9	14.8%	15.6%	69.2%	0.5%
GOP	7.0	13.5%	13.2%	73.2%	0.0%
Dem.	7.1	13.6%	14.9%	71.4%	0.0%

Q15—Q26w1. So, would you recommend that your Member of Congress vote in favor of or against this proposal?

	Favor	Against	Refused / Don't know
PA-7	82.1%	17.9%	0.0%
GOP	77.6%	22.4%	0.0%
Dem.	87.5%	12.5%	0.0%
National	81.1%	17.5%	1.4%
GOP	74.1%	24.6%	1.3%
Dem.	88.5%	10.7%	0.8%
Indep.	77.9%	18.8%	3.3%

Disclosure Final Assessments and Recommendations – Federal Contractors

Here is another proposal that goes further. It deals with federal contractors, which are private companies the Federal government hires to perform certain functions.

Q16—Q28w1. As you may know, some federal contractors are big campaign donors. According to this proposal federal contractors would be required to publicly disclose their donations to groups that spend money on campaign-related activities. Please select how acceptable this proposal would be to you.

	Mean	Unacceptable (0-4)	Just Tolerable (5)	Acceptable (6-10)	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	7.3	13.9%	12.6%	73.4%	0.2%
GOP	7.3	14.1%	9.2%	76.7%	0.0%
Dem.	7.3	15.0%	11.0%	73.6%	0.4%

Q17—Q29w1. So, would you favor or oppose requiring federal contractors to publicly disclose their donations to groups that spend money on campaign-related activities?ⁱⁱ

	Favor	Against	Refused / Don't know
PA-7	84.5%	15.2%	0.3%
GOP	80.6%	19.4%	0.0%
Dem.	88.0%	12.0%	0.0%

Constitutional Amendment to Overturn Citizens United

As you may recall, we discussed earlier how the U.S. Supreme Court in the last few years has made decisions that struck down a number of limits on campaign-related spending by organizations that are independent of campaigns. This has led to a major increase in campaign spending by big donors.

We have been considering proposals that seek to counter the influence of big donors by enhancing the influence of small donors or requiring greater transparency of all donations. Some people think this is not adequate

to counter the influence of big donors and say that Congress should directly limit all forms of campaign-related donations.

For Congress to do this, however, would require a new Constitutional amendment, which would override the Supreme Court's past decisions on this subject, including 'Citizens United,' and prevent the courts from striking down campaign finance laws in the future.

Passing any Constitutional amendment is quite challenging. It requires ratification by two thirds of Congress and three quarters of all states. Such an amendment has been proposed in both houses of Congress. It has two parts, which we will consider one at a time.

The first part of the proposed Constitutional amendment would say Congress and the states may regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others seeking to influence elections.

Here is an argument **in favor of** this part of the proposed amendment:

Q18—Q31w1. Clearly, we cannot go on letting people and organizations use the cover of the First Amendment to allow what is essentially bribery of Members of Congress. Since the recent Supreme Court decision to allow unlimited contributions, there has been a flood of money pouring into organizations seeking to influence elections. The rich should not have more influence just because they have more money. They are drowning out the voice of most ordinary voters. The Founders would be horrified by the amount of money in elections and this is just the kind of problem that they established the Constitutional amendment process to address. Congress should be able to set reasonable limits on political spending.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	42.5%	41.6%	84.1%	11.7%	3.8%	15.5%	0.4%
GOP	34.3%	47.3%	81.6%	14.6%	3.8%	18.4%	0.0%
Dem.	50.0%	36.4%	86.4%	10.1%	2.7%	12.8%	0.8%

Here is an argument **against** this part of the proposed amendment:

Q19—Q32w1. This proposal is an end run around Constitutional principles—practically an attempt to repeal the First Amendment. If people want to spend money making their views heard about a candidate, the government should not have the right to stop them. Should we assume that the government knows what the right amount of free speech is? Real freedom of speech is often inconvenient for somebody. You can't just pick and choose where you want it to apply. Tampering with the Constitution is a risky idea. Once you start limiting some forms of speech it becomes a slippery slope toward more and more limits on our freedoms.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	15.7%	35.2%	50.9%	30.4%	18.3%	48.7%	0.4%
GOP	16.9%	39.4%	56.3%	33.6%	9.7%	43.3%	0.4%
Dem.	16.4%	27.7%	44.1%	32.9%	22.4%	55.3%	0.6%

Now that you have reviewed these arguments, please select how acceptable this proposal would be:

Q20—Q33w1. **A new Constitutional amendment that** would say Congress and the states may regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections. Please select how acceptable this proposal would be to you.

	Mean	Unacceptable (0-4)	Just Tolerable (5)	Acceptable (6-10)	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	6.4	22.2%	15.3%	61.3%	1.3%
GOP	6.2	25.8%	6.8%	63.9%	3.6%
Dem.	6.7	19.7%	14.7%	65.5%	0.0%

The second part of the proposed Constitutional amendment would say that, in writing campaign finance laws, Congress would have the right to treat corporations and other organizations differently from ‘natural persons.’ This would allow Congress to restrict or even prohibit corporations and other organizations from spending money to influence elections.

Here is an argument **in favor of** this part of the proposed amendment:

Q21—Q34w1. A corporation should not have the same rights as a person. The idea that it is a group of people expressing their point of view is a fallacy. All of the people who are part of the corporation do not necessarily share a single point of view. A corporation is created to perform a function or to make money. It does not have the right to vote. Pursuing political influence through campaign-related donations in the service of a corporation’s goals is not something the Constitution was ever meant to protect. If the individuals associated with a corporation want to express a point of view or donate to a campaign, they are still free to do so.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	32.7%	39.6%	72.3%	21.5%	5.6%	27.1%	0.6%
GOP	27.4%	39.3%	66.7%	27.8%	5.0%	32.8%	0.5%
Dem.	36.7%	40.4%	77.1%	17.6%	5.2%	22.8%	0.2%

Here is an argument **against** this part of the proposed amendment:

Q22—Q35w1. People have the right to come together and become shareholders in a corporation. As shareholders they have a shared interest in the goals of the corporation. Thus, the corporation should have the same rights of free expression as do the individual shareholders. The fact that they are also seeking to make money should not make any difference. Making a Constitutional amendment that would restrict the freedom of shareholders to act together would subvert the underlying principles of the Constitution. Furthermore, some of the corporations that would be limited by this law are nonprofit corporations that serve good causes and should not be prevented from making their voice heard.

	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Total Convincing	Somewhat Unconvincing	Very Unconvincing	Total Unconvincing	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	13.3%	35.4%	48.7%	33.0%	18.3%	51.3%	0.0%
GOP	13.8%	40.8%	54.6%	32.2%	13.2%	45.4%	0.0%
Dem.	13.0%	33.2%	46.2%	31.3%	22.5%	53.8%	0.0%

Now that you have reviewed these arguments, please select how acceptable this proposal would be:

23—Q36w1. **A new Constitutional amendment** that says that, in writing campaign finance laws, Congress would have the right to treat corporations and other organizations differently from ‘natural persons.’ This would allow Congress to restrict or even prohibit corporations and other organizations from spending money to influence elections. Please select how acceptable this proposal would be to you.

	Mean	Unacceptable (0-4)	Just Tolerable (5)	Acceptable (6-10)	Refused / Don't Know
PA-7	6.3	25.5%	13.8%	60.4%	0.3%
GOP	5.9	31.8%	13.1%	55.1%	0.0%
Dem.	6.6	21.9%	11.7%	65.7%	0.7%

Now, let's look at the proposal as a whole:

The proposal is for a new Constitutional amendment that would have two parts. It would allow Congress and the states to write campaign finance laws that:

- May regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections.
- Can distinguish between people and corporations or other organizations, thus allowing legislators to restrict or prohibit corporations and other organizations from spending money to influence elections.

Q24—Q37w1. Would you recommend that your Members of Congress vote in favor or against this proposed Constitutional amendment?

	Favor	Against	Refused / Don't know
PA-7	75.9%	24.1%	0.0%
GOP	74.9%	25.1%	0.0%
Dem.	80.6%	19.4%	0.0%
National	75.0%	23.5%	1.6%
GOP	65.9%	32.6%	1.5%
Dem.	84.9%	14.1%	0.9%
Indep.	70.4%	26.4%	3.3%

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ **Six-to-One Match with New Tax**

Note: Q5 is the executive follow-up to Q4 and was modelled on Q30/Q31 pair of questions, which were fielded in Oct 2017. Q31 was based on a similar proposal from the Fair Elections Now Act (S. 1538) submitted in the 114th Congress. (See Q30 for Specifics). The current proposal was changed to be more consistent with H.R. 1 in the 117th Congress.

Q.31 Wave 3. So, would you recommend that your Members of Congress vote in favor or against this proposal?

	Favor	Against	Refused / Don't Know
National	66.0%	31.9%	2.1%
GOP	58.1%	40.4%	1.5%
Dem.	73.3%	24.1%	2.6%
Indep.	65.9%	31.8%	2.4%

- [Government Reform – Wave 3: National Questionnaire with Frequencies](#) (October 2017)

ⁱⁱ **Requiring Federal Contractors to Publicly Disclose Donations to Groups that Spend Money on Campaign-Related Activities**

Q.29 Wave 1. So, would you favor or oppose the President requiring Federal contractors to publicly disclose their donations to groups that spend money on campaign-related activities?

	Favor	Against	Refused / Don't know
National	85.2%	13.8%	0.9%
GOP	84.0%	15.4%	0.7%
Dem.	88.8%	10.3%	0.9%
Indep.	78.9%	19.5%	1.7%

- [Campaign Finance Reform: National Questionnaire with Frequencies](#) (August 2017)